

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 TRSE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 L-03
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-----053044 271836Z /50

R 271809Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6223
INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

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USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, GW
SUBJECT: GROWING DANGER OF MAJOR STRIKE IN METAL
MANUFACTURING

REF: (A) BONN 02766; (B) DUSSELDORF 351

SUMMARY: A MAJOR INDUSTRY WIDE STRIKE IN METAL MANU-
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FACTURING IN NORTH BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG AND NORTH RHINE-
WESTPHALIA NOW APPEARS POSSIBLE, ALTHOUGH MEDIATION
EFFORTS BY NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIAN LABOR AND SOCIAL
AFFAIRS MINISTER FARTHMAN (SPD) MAY LEAD TO A LAST
MINUTE SETTLEMENT. CONCILIATION PROCEEDINGS IN BOTH
AREAS FAILED ON FEBRUARY 25. AS A RESULT, THE METAL-
WORKERS UNION'S REGIONAL BARGAINING COMMISSIONS WILL

REQUEST APPROVAL FOR HOLDING A STRIKE VOTE BY THE NATIONAL UNION EXECUTIVE BOARD WHICH WILL MAKE ITS DECISION ON MARCH 1. THE PRINTERS UNION ALSO WILL OPEN A NEW SERIES OF LIMITED AND UNLIMITED SELECTIVE STRIKES IN NEWSPAPER PRINTING THIS WEEK. MOREOVER, THE DGB UNIONS ORGANIZING GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND THE INDEPENDENT GERMAN EMPLOYEES UNION (DAG) WILL OPEN THE FIRST BARGAINING ROUND ON A REQUESTED 7.5 PERCENT PAY HIKE AND AN ADDITIONAL 5 DAYS OF ANNUAL LEAVE FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ON FEBRUARY 28. END SUMMARY.

1. NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIAN LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTER FARTHMANN (SPD), A FORMER DGB OFFICIAL, SUCCESSFULLY SERVED AS A MEDIATOR TO END THE WAGE DISPUTE IN THE STEEL INDUSTRY IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA, OSNABRUECK AND BREMEN (REF A). THE PARTIES AGREED ON A COMPROMISE "PACKAGE" PROVIDING FOR A 4 PERCENT PAY INCREASE, RETROACTIVE TO FEBRUARY 1 AND VALID UNTIL OCTOBER 31, A DM 200 "LUMP-SUM" COMPENSATION COVERING THE PERIOD NOVEMBER 1977 THROUGH JANUARY 1978, PROTECTIVE CLAUSES FOR WORKERS TRANSFERRED TO LOWER-PAID JOBS, AND OTHER FRINGE BENEFITS.

2. THE REGIONAL CONCILIATION PROCEEDINGS IN THE NORTH BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG METAL INDUSTRY OPENED ON FEBRUARY 16. AFTER LENGTHY DISCUSSIONS, THE NEUTRAL CHAIRMAN UNCLASSIFIED

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OF THE CONCILIATION BOARD, HELMUT HORN, PRESIDENT OF THE STUTTGART HIGHER LAND COURT, EVENTUALLY SUBMITTED A CONCILIATION PROPOSAL PROVIDING FOR A 4.8 PERCENT PAY INCREASE ALONG WITH SOME PROVISIONS TO PROTECT WORKERS AGAINST THE EFFECTS OF RATIONALIZATION. BOTH THE DGB METALWORKERS UNION AND THE REGIONAL METAL EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION REJECTED THE CONCILIATION PROPOSAL ON FEBRUARY 25. THE UNION'S REGIONAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING COMMISSION WILL MEET ON FEBRUARY 28 TO ASK THE UNION'S NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD FOR APPROVAL TO HOLD A STRIKE VOTE. THE UNION'S NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD WILL ACT ON THIS REQUEST ON MARCH 1.

3. DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA WERE SIMILAR TO THOSE IN NORTH BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG, BUT WITH THE EXCEPTION THAT THE NEUTRAL CHAIRMAN OF THE CONCILIATION BOARD, PROFESSOR BLUME OF THE COLOGNE UNIVERSITY, REFRAINED FROM SUBMITTING A CONCILIATION PROPOSAL SINCE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LABOR AND MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVES ON THE BOARD COULD NOT BE NARROWED. UNION REPRESENTATIVES INSISTED ON A SETTLEMENT OVER AND ABOVE 5 PERCENT, WHILE MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVES WERE NOT

PREPARED TO GO BEYOND 4 PERCENT PLUS. BOTH PARTIES
ANNOUNCED THE FAILURE OF THE CONCILIATION EFFORT. THE
UNION'S REGIONAL BARGAINING COMMISSION WILL MEET
ON FEBRUARY 27 TO REQUEST APPROVAL FOR HOLDING A STRIKE
VOTE.

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4. THE SITUATION IN THE PRINTING INDUSTRY REMAINS CON-
FUSING. THE EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATIONS CONTINUE TO REFUSE
NEW NEGOTIATIONS ON A COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT TO PROTECT
SKILLED WORKERS (MAINLY TYPESETTERS) FROM THE EFFECTS
OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES (REF A). THE EMPLOYERS BE-

LIEVE THAT THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT WHICH
WAS DRAFTED TOGETHER WITH UNION EXPERTS AND FINALLY
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SIGNED BY THE UNION'S VICE PRESIDENT, FERLEMANN, RE-
PRESENTS THE LAST WORD. THE UNION LEADERSHIP WHICH
UNANIMOUSLY REJECTED THE AGREEMENT (THUS YIELDING TO
PRESSURE BY THE RANK AND FILE), IS NOW LOOKING FOR A
METHOD TO ENFORCE THE REOPENING OF NEGOTIATIONS. IT
ANNOUNCED A NEW SERIES OF LIMITED WORK STOPPAGES AND
SELECTIVE STRIKES TO BEGIN THIS WEEK AFTER STRIKE VOTES
IN MAJOR NEWSPAPER PRINTING ESTABLISHMENTS ARE HELD.
DGB PRESIDENT VETTER HAS REAFFIRMED THE SOLIDARITY OF
THE DGB WITH THE PRINTERS' UNION. THE DGB COMMERCE,
BANKING AND INSURANCE WORKERS UNION (HBV), AND THE
GERMAN JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION (DJV), WHO ARE ALSO
PARTIES TO THE CONTRACT INVOLVED (AND WHO HAVE BASICALLY
ACCEPTED IT) ARE STILL WITHHOLDING THEIR SIGNATURE
TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR SOLIDARITY WITH THE PRINTERS'
UNION. IN ADDITION, THE PRINTERS' UNION NOW CALLS FOR
A 7.5 PERCENT PAY INCREASE EFFECTIVE MAY 1, WHEN THE
CURRENT WAGE AGREEMENT IN PRINTING EXPIRES.

5. THE FIRST BARGAINING ROUND FOR THE MORE THAN 1.5
MILLION BLUE COLLAR WORKERS AND SALARIED EMPLOYEES IN
GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC UTILITIES WILL
OPEN ON FEBRUARY 28. GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN HAVE CALLED
UNION DEMANDS FOR A 7.5 PERCENT PAY INCREASE AND AN
INCREASE IN ANNUAL LEAVE BY 5 WORKING DAYS "ABSOLUTELY
UNREALISTIC". THE PRESIDENT OF THE DGB PUBLIC SERVICE
AND TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION (OETV), HEINZ KLUNCKER,
WARNED THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST "IMITATING THE MEAN ATTITUDE
OF PRIVATE EMPLOYERS" IN RECENT WAGE NEGOTIATIONS.
HE POINTED OUT THAT RECENT SETTLEMENTS FOR DOCKWORKERS
AND STEELWORKERS (REF A) WOULD HAVE NO IMPACT ON THE
NEGOTIATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AND ADDED THAT
HIS UNION WOULD CONCENTRATE ON THE ISSUE OF ANNUAL
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Message Attributes

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